Justice
September 5, 2008

## Federal/Provincial/Territorial Ministers Committed to Addressing Key Justice and Public Safety Issues Facing Canadians

(Quebec City, Quebec) – Federal, provincial and territorial ministers responsible for Justice and Public Safety concluded their meeting yesterday, after in-depth discussions on key justice and public safety issues currently facing Canadians.

The meeting was co-chaired by the Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Rob Nicholson, P.C., Q.C., the Minister of Public Safety, Stockwell Day and the Minister of Justice, Attorney General and Minister of Public Safety of Quebec, Jacques P. Dupuis.

Ministers noted the need for continued commitment and collaboration in ensuring that those who break the law are held to account for their crimes. They also recognized the importance of developing a justice system that is responsive to the evolving nature of society and criminal activity in Canada and around the world.

### Justice effectiveness

Federal, provincial and territorial ministers agreed on the importance of an effective criminal justice system, and supported a provincial-territorial agreement to share information and best practices based on their own experiences and innovative operational reforms.

Ministers also stated there are many areas in which jurisdictions can work in partnership to make the justice system work more effectively, for example, a reduction in unproductive court appearances and case delays.

### Missing persons

Ministers discussed the serious issue of missing persons and recognized the particular concerns related to missing Aboriginal women. Ministers supported work to improve responses to missing person cases and mandated officials to conduct further work on this matter.

### Mandatory reporting of child pornography

Ministers agreed that Canada's response to child pornography could be enhanced by federal legislation requiring any agency whose services could be used to facilitate the commission of online child pornography offences to report suspected material.

### *Youth Criminal Justice Act*

Provincial and territorial ministers supported the federal review of the *Youth Criminal Justice Act* and asked for a meaningful role in developing proposals for reform. Areas of concern identified by all ministers include improving responses to serious and repeat youth offenders, giving greater discretion to judges regarding pre-trial detention and sentencing, and dealing with the complexity of the *Act*.

### Credit for time served

Provincial and territorial ministers urged the federal Minister of Justice to implement reforms agreed to by all ministers in 2006 and 2007 to limit the availability of credit for time served to up to 1.5 to 1. When the accused has been detained due to his / her criminal record, or for having violated bail conditions, the maximum ratio would be 1 to 1.

**Non-returnable warrants**

In order to deal with the serious issue of fugitives escaping criminal proceedings in their home jurisdiction by fleeing to another jurisdiction, Ministers endorsed a proposal for a specific *Criminal Code* offence for failing to remain in a jurisdiction when ordered to do so by the Court.

**Workplan on Organized Crime**

All ministers agreed that the harmful consequences of organized crime and gang violence have a significant negative impact on the safety and security of Canada and Canadians. Provincial and territorial ministers noted that legislative reforms to address such issues as drive-by shootings and assaults on peace officers are necessary. Ministers also identified the importance of new operational responses, highlighting renewed efforts by Crown prosecutors, police and others to work more closely together. Ministers also agreed on the importance of information sharing, joint training and priority research to better understand the scope and impact of organized crime in Canada.

**Procedural reforms**

Ministers endorsed a range of proposals for criminal procedure reform in order to build a more effective and timely criminal justice system, including introducing procedures to allow for the greater use of telewarrants, better regulation of agents appearing in the courts, clearer rules concerning electronic disclosure of evidence to the accused, and clarification of the use of expert witness evidence so that it can be more effective.

**Legal aid**

Provincial and territorial ministers of justice reiterated their concern about the ability of Canadians to access the justice system. Legal aid is an essential element of providing Canadians with this access. In particular, provincial and territorial ministers pressed the federal Minister of Justice to provide new funding to support civil legal aid and to increase federal funding for criminal legal aid.

In this context, ministers received business cases prepared for both criminal and civil legal aid. The federal Minister of Justice committed to discussing the criminal legal aid business case with his federal colleagues, and to presenting the provincial and territorial civil legal aid business case to his colleague, the Minister of Finance. provinces and territories emphasized to the federal minister the need for legal aid in the family law area, particularly for vulnerable women and children.

**Capacity and shared responsibility**

Ministers agreed that the components of justice are an integrated and shared responsibility. Provinces and territories noted that the justice system must have enhanced capacity to effectively implement reforms that affect policing services, prosecutions, legal aid, courts, and corrections.

The federal Minister of Public Safety Canada indicated that significant investments have been made by the Federal Government for public safety initiatives. Concerns were raised by provinces and territories about inadequate, long-term, sustainable federal resourcing necessary to ensure police services meet the expectations of municipalities, policing partners and the public. Other concerns were expressed regarding capacity for DNA testing. Provincial and territorial ministers also asked for continued federal funding for the Child-Centred Family Justice Strategy.

**Aboriginal policing**

Provincial and territorial ministers strongly endorsed enhancing Aboriginal policing capacity to ensure adequate resources to address the unique needs of the Northern and Aboriginal communities across Canada.

**Law reform**

Ministers provided their collective support for the recent criminal law reforms brought in by the federal government, specifically the *Tackling Violent Crime Act* (Bill C-2), and acknowledged that these reforms reflect the concerns of Canadians.

Most provincial and territorial ministers expressed concern over the cost of implementing some elements of these essential law reforms, and the absence of federal funding, and they urged the Federal Government to provide adequate resources to implement the provisions of Bill C-2.

**Contract policing**

Provincial and territorial ministers agreed on the critical need for a provincial-territorial role in the governance of the RCMP. The federal Minister of Public Safety Canada indicated his willingness to work collaboratively with the provinces and territories on the modernization of the RCMP. All ministers also supported the need for significant improvements in the RCMP public complaints process.

**Correctional services**

It was noted that provinces and territories have engaged in a study on the Changing Face of Corrections and they urged the Federal Government to consider the results of the study prior to implementing any recommendations of the federal study that have cross-jurisdictional impacts.

Provincial and territorial ministers urged that a meeting of federal, provincial and territorial ministers be convened in six months to maintain the momentum on strategic issues such as justice effectiveness, combating organized crime and corrections reform.

- 30 -

Media contacts:

Émilie Rouleau
Press Secretary
Office of Minister Dupuis
418-643-2112

Darren Eke
Press Secretary
Office of the Minister of Justice
613-992-4621

Media Relations
Federal Department of Justice
613-957-4207

Ken Morrissey
Director of Communications
Newfoundland and Labrador Department of Justice
709-729-6985, 685-6612

2008 09 05 3:50 p.m.



All material copyright the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador. No unauthorized copying or redeployment permitted. The Government assumes no responsibility for the accuracy of any material deployed on an unauthorized server.
Disclaimer/Copyright/Privacy Statement